

REMARKS

Claims 2, 10 and 18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 2, 10 and 18 are amended. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Cabrera during the personal interview held on August 8, 2006, are gratefully appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview. It should be noted that although the Interview Summary indicates that claim 1 was discussed, in fact claims 2, 10 and 18 were discussed.

The Office Action rejects claims 2, 10 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Inui et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,204,821) and Andrade et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0109950) in view of Akihiro (JP 11312197). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, none of the applied references, alone or in combination, disclose or suggest a parts procurement system that includes a virtual production line and correction means for correcting the virtual production line, wherein the correction means changes the virtual production line by detecting a production progress, as recited in independent claim 2 and similarly recited in independent claims 10 and 18. Support for this feature can be found in the specification at, for example, page 4, lines 14-21.

The Office Action admits that Inui and Andrade fail to disclose or suggest "some limitations" of claims 2, 10 and 18 (Office Action, page 3, lines 12-13). Some limitations not disclosed by Inui and Andrade are the correction means and the way in which they correct the virtual production line. Moreover, Akihiro teaches a system to easily generate, correct and change a schedule plan by deciding the delivery required days of respective sub-units from lead times by means of each word process (Problem to be Solved).

As agreed during the personal interview and as indicated in the Office Action, Akihiro teaches changing the virtual production line by correcting the date of order and the delivery

date of each part, and changes the scheduling of a given product model when modifications in scheduling arise using the schedule modification information 53 (paragraphs [0062] - [0063]). Akihiro then teaches modifying the delivery lead day of each sub-unit on the basis of the changed lead time and decides on the date of order and delivery date of each part article (paragraph [0063]).

However, as agreed during the personal interview, Akihiro teaches correcting the production line on the basis of design change (paragraph [0019]), and changes in the lead time of the bill of materials master 101 (paragraph [0065]), but does not teach bringing changes to the production line on the basis of a production progress. A change in the production line on the basis of the production process is described in the specification at, for example, page 4, lines 14-21, where the vehicle production results file 26 stores data on vehicles actually obtained from production line and allows checking of whether or not the production has been carried out on the production line as planned, and if the production results are different from the plan, then the production plan is changed accordingly. Akihiro does not disclose or suggest such a feature. Thus, Akihiro fails to teach changing the virtual production line by correcting a production progress, as recited in independent claims 2, 10 and 18.

For at least these reasons, a combination of the applied references fails to disclose or suggest the features of independent claims 2, 10 and 18. Thus, independent claims 2, 10 and 18, and their dependent claims, are patentable over a combination of the applied references. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 2, 10 and 18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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